

APRIL 2016

TRF Newsletter

Solution Celebration Showcases the Results of a Year of Design Thinking

On April 29th, educators from 8 Los Angeles County Catholic schools gathered at the Annenberg Beach House in Santa Monica to exhibit the results of a year-long facilitated fellowship through the design-thinking process.

Guided by representatives from TrueSchool Studio, these teams of 3-5 educators spent over 80 hours outside their normal course-load designing, testing, and refining solutions to issues at their schools. Though each school tackled different problems, the combined expertise of the cohort was an indispensable tool along the way. This ongoing collaboration fostered close relationships among schools and so the showcase was a great opportunity for colleagues to celebrate each other's accomplishments, as well as to provide feedback and further ideas for refinement.

Some common issues tackled by schools included parent engagement, building student character, and the use of data to inform teaching. The team from St. John Bosco polled students and determined that they had trouble balancing the demands of a busy schedule. To address the added stress, the school implemented an intermittent flex period during which students could choose activities from seeking extra help from a teacher to playing basketball or even just napping! Immaculate Conception's team discovered that parents wanted more tools to support their children's learning. They then designed a series of teacher-led parent workshops to provide that support and found that such engagement helped build relationships among parents as well.

It has been amazing and inspiring for foundation staff to see the tremendous growth of these participating educators over the course of this program. They were extremely open to trusting the process and constantly worked with the best interests of their students in mind. The enthusiasm with which they approached this opportunity is contagious and their confidence and pride in their solutions must be applauded.

We want to thank our partners at the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation who helped make this program a reality and who attended the event in support of these hard-working educators. And as always, we want to recognize those educators themselves for their efforts in service of Los Angeles students.



A student from Our Lady of the Holy Rosary describes the new peer tutoring program and resource room that her school developed through the design-thinking fellowship.

2016 TRF Calendar

May: 2016 Instructional Innovation Awards Announced

August: 2016-17 Riordan Foundation Grant Calendar Released

September: Recreational Reading Mini-Grant Application Opens

October - November: Awareness Sessions Take Place



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Recreational Reading Mini-Grant Winners Receive Books, Smiles Abound

Started in 1993, the Recreational Reading Mini-Grant (RRMG) is The Riordan Foundation's longest running program by far. Offered annually, this grant provides \$1,000 worth of books to winning teachers for their classroom libraries. These titles are meant to spark students' interest, rather than contribute to a formal literacy curriculum. In this way we hope to help kids develop a love of reading that will serve them throughout their lives.

One of the best times of the year for foundation staff is during February and March when RRMG winners start to receive their books. The excitement is palpable as a number of thank you emails, pictures, and hand-written cards come in from grateful teachers and students. While we don't do this work for the recognition, it is nice to be able to share in the joy that recipients feel when receiving boxes and boxes of brand new books.

Each teacher handles the introduction of the new texts differently, but there is always a sense of great occasion. We have heard about classes holding book parties or even hosting events afterschool with parents to celebrate. Some teachers start bookclubs to delve deeper into the added titles and others create comfortable reading nooks to give students a sacred space to enjoy time with their favorite series and characters.

An example message really shows the passion and delight provided by this program: "Receiving this grant has made my students so happy! In my classroom we love Mo Willems books and my students can't wait to check them out from our classroom library to take home. It is a joy to see students read to one another in my classroom and new books are so exciting to people of any age! My students have a tremendous amount of enthusiasm for books and I would like to thank you!"

We are grateful for the opportunity to spread a love of reading throughout Los Angeles and must acknowledge the bookselling partners that make this program possible: Barnes & Noble, Perma-Bound, and First Book. We also want to recognize the amazing teachers who put so much effort into securing resources for their students.

Information about the next cycle of the grant will be posted on our website www.riordanfoundation.org in August. The application typically opens at the end of September with a due date in late November. See our website for eligibility requirements.



Alexandria Elementary School students in Mr. Bernal's Reading Club enjoy new copies of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* provided by the Recreational Reading Mini-Grant.

We're Hiring!

The Riordan Foundation is looking for an energetic team player to join our close-knit office as the Assistant to the President!

This individual will have responsibilities ranging from basic office tasks to management of the Recreational Reading Mini-Grant. Other duties include creating publications such as the newsletter and annual report, directing the foundation's social media and online presence, and managing the president's calendar.

Successful candidates will be mature, reliable, exhibit attention to detail, and have a positive attitude. Experience in an office environment or the education field is a plus. Applicants should also be comfortable around dogs as we have two friendly office canines.

A full job description can be downloaded from <http://www.riordanfoundation.org/resources/jobs.html>. Please share this opportunity with your networks!

